

provide a more convenient, transparent and affordable way to choose among a variety of health plans that meets individual needs. Americans who cannot afford to purchase coverage within the exchange will receive financial assistance to ensure that they can obtain comprehensive coverage. Additionally, small businesses will receive tax credits that will make it more affordable to offer insurance to their employees.

I am also pleased that this bill encourages competition by ensuring that Americans will have the ability to choose a public plan alternative. Unlike private insurance carriers, the public option will not be obligated by big profits for shareholders or large salaries for CEOs. And while it represents just one option for the consumer and one component of health care reform, it will serve as an important tool to increase choice and competition and lower overall insurance costs.

Included in this proposal are a number of important health consumer protections. It will finally end insurance discrimination against people with pre-existing conditions and prevent insurance companies from imposing lifetime limits or dropping coverage when people are sick and need it most. It will cap out-of-pocket expenses so people don't go broke when they get sick; eliminate extra charges for preventive care like mammograms and diabetes tests; and protect Medicare for seniors while working to eliminate the "donut-hole" gap in coverage for prescription drugs. It will also require that insurers reinvest at least 85 percent of their premiums back into health coverage. This will limit the amount of money spent on advertising, underwriting, overhead and profits that do nothing but reduce health benefits for patients.

Improving access to coverage will also require investments in our health care workforce. Our system is strained by a lack of nurses and primary care physicians, particularly in underserved areas. That is why our bill contains important workforce development initiatives like new scholarships and loan repayment programs, grant programs for primary care training and immediate financial support for community health centers. This will strengthen the number of nurses, doctors and other health care professionals necessary to meet the increased demand for services.

This bill also makes historic changes to our antitrust laws by removing exemption enjoyed by insurance companies so that they are no longer shielded from liability for price fixing or dominating their market—all of which reduce competition and increase prices for consumers. It establishes new grant programs designed to encourage states to implement alternatives to traditional medical malpractice litigation with the goal of reducing frivolous lawsuits while allowing legitimate cases to be heard. This bill also has my strong support because every portion will be completely paid for, and it will reduce the deficit by \$109 billion over the next ten years.

Mr. Speaker, I believe it is incumbent on us as policymakers to offer a new vision for health care in America—one that contains costs, improves quality, increases efficiency, promotes wellness, puts health care decisions back in the hands of patients and doctors, and guarantees coverage as a right to our citizens.

Every American deserves the promise of quality, affordable health care. I urge my colleagues to join me in fulfilling that promise

today, and support the Affordable Health Care for America Act.

RECOGNITION OF THE 211TH REGIONAL SUPPORT GROUP

HON. SOLOMON P. ORTIZ

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 19, 2009

Mr. ORTIZ. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize the 211th Regional Support Group from Corpus Christi, Texas, for their tireless efforts to ensure the security and well being of not only the country of Iraq but the United States as well.

Deployed on December 1, 2008, this unit worked in the face of grave danger and performed in an exemplary fashion in the management of installation and camp activities.

Sixty members of this unit will be returning to my district on Saturday, November 21, and it is my honor and privilege to welcome them home.

Our Reservists put their lives on hold, to fulfill the duties asked of them. I have the greatest respect for our service men and women who selflessly disregard their own safety in order to voluntarily serve our country.

Today, I ask that my colleagues join me in commemorating the 211th Regional Support Group of Corpus Christi, Texas, for their service to this nation.

HONORING ST. HUGO OF THE HILLS IN BLOOMFIELD HILLS, MICHIGAN

HON. GARY C. PETERS

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 19, 2009

Mr. PETERS. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize and honor the selection of St. Hugo of the Hills in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan, as a 2009 Blue Ribbon School. This prestigious award is the highest honor bestowed by the United States Department of Education. That St. Hugo earned this designation is a testament to the dedication of its administration, teachers, staff, students, parents and community members, whose hard work of self-evaluation, review and goal-setting for the future has proved exemplary.

The Blue Ribbon Schools designation is reserved for schools that provide only the most rigorous academic programs or which have made only the most dramatic strides in improving their students' academic achievement. In fact, St. Hugo School was the only private school in Michigan to receive the award this year. St. Hugo of the Hills has a long-celebrated and exemplary tradition of striving for academic excellence, with standardized test scores that reflect a deep commitment to high achievement. St. Hugo of the Hills provides its students an outstanding program of nationally recognized excellence in an environment in which the teachings of the Catholic faith are instilled, nurtured and demonstrated. Since 1940, it is this combination that has enabled St. Hugo to count among its alumni scores of community leaders and dedicated, productive citizens.

Madam Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join my recognition of St. Hugo of the Hills on the honor of its outstanding achievement for being designated a 2009 National Blue Ribbon School.

CONGRESSMAN BOBBY L. RUSH
DAY

HON. BARBARA LEE

OF CALIFORNIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, November 19, 2009

Ms. LEE of California. Madam Speaker, on behalf of the Congressional Black Caucus I rise today in honor of my colleague and fellow CBC member, the Honorable BOBBY L. RUSH. Throughout his distinguished career, Congressman RUSH has served as a determined leader for civil rights and a passionate advocate for our nation's least fortunate citizens and their communities. On Saturday, November 28th, Rev. Jesse Jackson and the RainbowPUSH Coalition will honor Congressman RUSH during "Bobby Rush Day," a celebration of his life and service.

Congressman RUSH was born in Albany, Georgia, in 1946 and spent his childhood growing up on the north and west sides of Chicago. As a child, his Boy Scout Master encouraged BOBBY to pursue public service. Congressman RUSH enlisted in the United States Army at the age of 17, which marked the beginning of what was to become a life-long career in public service. After serving honorably for 5 years, he left the Army to attend Roosevelt University, where he graduated with honors in 1973.

It was during this time that Congressman RUSH began his passionate advocacy for the basic civil and human rights of minorities, as a member of the Civil Rights Movement. In addition to serving as a member of the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee, Congressman RUSH co-founded the Illinois Black Panther Party in 1968. With the Panther Party, Congressman RUSH organized the Free Breakfast for Children program and established a Free Medical Clinic, which gained renown as the nation's first to develop a mass sickle cell anemia testing program.

This commitment to the health and dignity of communities of color has been a remarkable trademark of Congressman RUSH's career in public service. After serving as an Alderman in the Chicago City Council for 8 years, Congressman RUSH was elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 1993 to serve Illinois' First Congressional District. Congressman RUSH has been a strong leader and vocal proponent for issues such as health care reform, job creation, environmental protection, gun control and ending the embargo against Cuba. Most recently, as Chairman of the Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Commerce, Trade and Consumer Protection, Congressman RUSH used his deft leadership to shepherd the bipartisan passage of the Consumer Product Safety Improvement Act of 2008 (H.R. 4040), which modernized the Consumer Product Safety Commission and established essential safety requirements for children's products.

An ordained Baptist minister, Congressman RUSH has remained true to the principles of truth and justice throughout his distinguished